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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 006939

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/7/2016  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EWWT](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [AE](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: DHOW TRADE BETWEEN THE UAE AND SOMALIA

REF: A. DUBAI 06881, B. DUBAI 06884

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CLASSIFIED BY: Paul R Sutphin, Consul General, Dubai, UAE.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1.(C) Summary: Nearly 25 large wooden motor dhows regularly carry cargo between Somalia and the ports of Ajman and Dubai creek in the UAE. The dhows carry a wide variety of general cargo to Somalia, usually returning with Somali wood and charcoal. UAE customs oversight of exports via dhow is lax. Somalia-bound cargo is arranged through specialist agents. End summary.

2.(C) Commercial cargo dhows sail regularly between Somalia and the ports of Dubai Creek and Ajman in the UAE. Dhows that load cargo in Dubai creek sail to the ports of Bosaso and Berbera in northern Somalia, while dhows sailing from Ajman call at Kismayu and small ports in southern Somalia.

3.(C) The majority of cargo dhows sailing between the UAE and Somalia are registered in Gujarat, India and have Indian crews. A few Pakistani-registered and -crewed dhows also sail to Somalia. According to the crews, these dhows work UAE-Somalia trade routes exclusively and rarely return to their countries of registry.

4.(C) Dhow crews estimate there to be up to 25 dhows sailing regularly between the UAE and Somalia, ranging in size between 500 and 700 tons. Though registered as "motor sailing vessels," MSVs, all of them are "launches" and are powered solely by marine engines. Of the dhows observed on the Dubai creek, the Indian dhows sailing to Somalia are some of the largest and the best-maintained.

Cargo

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5.(C) Dhows sailing from Dubai for northern Somalia carry a wide variety of goods, including lumber, lubricants, tires, vehicle and machinery parts, complete vehicles, bulk and processed foodstuffs, consumer electronics, and durable goods. Tires for automobiles and trucks are, by volume, the largest observed cargo shipped to southern Somalia.

6.(C) Dhows arriving in the UAE from Somalia mainly carry bagged charcoal and wood. Livestock, primarily goats and sheep, is also shipped from Somalia, but this trade has diminished greatly over recent years.

#### Customs Oversight

7.(C) Dhows arriving from Somalia are subject to inspection by the customs authorities of the emirates of Dubai and Ajman, as are dhows loading cargo for shipment. The areas where dhows load in Ajman and Dubai are uncontrolled areas accessible to the public (reftels A and B).

#### Shipping Agents

8.(C) Most shipments to northern and southern Somalia are arranged through shipping agents who specialize in cargo bound for Somalia. According to one of the agents, a Somali who has resided in the UAE for more than 30 years, there are four or five agents in the UAE who book cargo on dhows for Somalia. The use of shipping agents for Somalia bound cargo is not the norm for dhows loading on Dubai creek (ref B).

#### Cost of Voyage

9.(C) The freight for a voyage by a 500 ton launch from Dubai to the northern Somali port of Busasao was quoted between AED 105,000 and 120,000 (USD 28,600 to 32,700). The vessel's master said that the actual price would be based on the cargo and the expected weather.

#### Length of Voyage

10.(C) A voyage between Dubai and the ports of Berbera or Busasao in northern Somalia normally take 8 days. During the summer voyages can stretch to two weeks if there are unfavorable winds.

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11.(C) Comment: Due to the ongoing unrest in Somalia and lack of adequate port facilities in the country, the current level of dhow traffic between the UAE and Somalia is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

SUTPHIN